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MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
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Letter dated 16 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to refer to the letter dated 12 February 1999 addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations (A/53/831-S/1999/158). This letter marks the latest attempt by the Representative of Lebanon to mislead Member States and, most important, to divert attention from Lebanon's direct responsibility for the volatile situation in southern Lebanon.

Lebanon continues to allow and even encourage Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations to use Lebanese territory for their declared jihad against Israel. Lebanon also refuses to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the problem. Moreover, the Lebanese Government refuses to disarm these groups. This is contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. For these reasons, Lebanon bears the sole burden of responsibility for the continued conflict. Lebanon cannot engage in international terrorism with impunity.

It should be noted that the aims of the Iranian-backed terrorist group that Lebanon endorses have again been clarified: Hezbollah's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, announced recently that "Palestine is occupied territory and the Israeli presence there is an occupation entity and illegal. There is no end to the struggle with such a regime" (Joumhouri Islami, 6 March 1999). In other words, when Lebanese leaders praise the "jihad" and "resistance" of Hezbollah, as Lebanon's Prime Minister recently did (Voice of Lebanon, 16 February 1999), it should be understood that they are lending their support to a campaign meant to continue until Israel does not exist.

Lebanon refuses to negotiate with Israel on implementing Security Council resolution 425 (1978), despite Israel's continuing invitations to do so.

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* A/54/50.

Lebanon's Prime Minister reiterated this point on 14 March in a radio interview: "We are not at all ready to discuss with Israel any security arrangements or granting any guarantees" (Sawt al-Arab, 14 March 1999). Hezbollah, which has been given free reign by the Lebanese Government, is even more explicit about its disdain for any diplomatic option: "Only resistance will ensure the return of our land, not resolution 425 (1978), nor the Security Council or the international community" (statement by Hezbollah's Sheikh Nasrallah, The Jerusalem Post, 5 January 1999). Israel, therefore, is left with no option other than to defend itself in accordance with its rights under international law.

Israel has repeatedly expressed its willingness to implement resolution 425 (1978) in its entirety. Resolution 425 (1978) not only calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in the area. The declared willingness of the Lebanese Government to allow terrorist activities from its territory against a neighbouring country is totally incompatible with the last two provisions of the resolution. Israel calls upon the Government of Lebanon to cooperate with Israel in order to restore peace and security along our common border. Until that time, Israel reserves the right to act in its own self-defence in accordance with international law.

I should be grateful if you will have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 161 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative